

The Sacred Heart Mission
Vicinity of Cataldo
Kootenai County
Idaho

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ID-1
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THE SACRED HEART MISSION

Cataldo, Kootenai County, Idaho

LOCATION: Adjacent to Highway 10, about 20 miles east of
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

OWNER: The Diocese of Boise; administered by St. Rita's
Parish of the Catholic Church

USE: Once each year Mass is celebrated on August 15.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This is one of the earliest Catholic missions constructed in the old Idaho Territory. It was begun in 1848 by Father Ravalli, a Jesuit priest. The structure represents an unusual design concept in early pioneer structures, and was achieved by unskilled Indian workmen using few tools. The Jesuits labored at the Mission from 1846 to 1877 and during this time they revolutionized the life of the Indians. During the Indian hostilities of 1877, the Mission served as the base camp for crews working on the Mullan Road that passed nearby. The Mission stands today as Idaho's oldest building. It has been designated as a Structure of Exceptional Value under Theme XV, Western Expansion, sub-theme E: Military and Indian Affairs; and sub-theme H: Overland Migration of the Trans-Mississippi West, of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings conducted by the National Park Service. Designated as a National Landmark in 1962.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The Mission was constructed by the Jesuit Order between 1848 and 1852-3. Here the Jesuits

functioned until 1877 when the Indians were moved to DeSmet, Idaho, and the Mission was transferred there also. The Jesuit Order deeded the Mission to the Diocese of Boise of the Catholic Church and the structure today is governed by St. Rita's Parish.

2. Date of Erection: Begun in 1848, ready for use in 1850, and completed in 1852-3.
3. Architect: Father Anthony Ravalli of the Jesuit Order.
4. Builders: Father Ravalli, Brother Huybrechts, and a band of untutored Indians.
5. Original Plans: None known.
6. Notes on Alterations and Additions: The Mission remains today primarily as it was in 1865 when Father Caruana lined the walls with clapboard. After the Mission activities were moved to DeSmet, Idaho, the church deteriorated until its restoration began in 1928.
7. Historical Importance and Background: The original site of the church was on the banks of the St. Joe River about 40 miles southwest of the present site. Due to constant flooding, the original location was abandoned and Father Joset constructed a temporary chapel on the present site, chosen by Father DeSmet in 1846 while on one of his visits to the Coeur d'Alene Indians.

Father Anthony Ravalli, a Jesuit priest born in Ferrara, Italy, was called upon to design the Coeur d'Alene Mission of the Sacred Heart. At that time, Father Ravalli was stationed at St. Mary's Mission in Montana. (St. Mary's Mission is located in Stevensville, Montana, and was the first mission in the Northwest, built in 1841.) Construction began on the Mission in 1848, and Father Ravalli commuted between St. Mary's and the site of construction to direct the building. After St. Mary's Mission was temporarily closed, Father Ravalli was placed in charge of the Coeur d'Alene Mission. He and Brother Huybrechts, assisted by a band of Indians, completed the structure using only a broad-axe, an augur, some rope and pulleys, a pen knife, and an improvised whipsaw. Huge timbers

for the columns and uprights were cut from the surrounding hillsides.

Father Ravalli and Brother Huybrechts together executed the hand-carved interior decor.

8. Important Old Views:

- a. History of the Coeur d'Alene Mission by Reverend R. Cody, M.A., contains several fine photographs of the interior of the Mission as well as detail shots of the wall construction, entry doors, etc.
- b. History of Idaho, Vol. I, edited by James H. Hawley, has both an exterior and an interior view of the Mission on page 829.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. The geographical location of the Mission was a key factor in the settlement of the Northwest. The Jesuit Mission lay one-eighth of a mile from the Old Yellowstone Trail.
2. Father Joset, Vice-Provincial of the Missions of the Northwest, made the Mission his headquarters.
3. After the Indian War of 1858, Father Joset had planned to close the Mission. Lt. John Mullan, directing the building of the Mullan Road that was to link Fort Benton, at the head of the navigation on the Missouri River with Wallnea on the Columbia River, urged Father Joset not to close the Mission. Road crews used the Mission as a base camp.
4. Mullan Road completed in 1862.
5. Father Cataldo, in whose honor the little station on the Union Pacific Railroad about a mile from the Mission is named, came among the Coeur d'Alene Indians in 1865.
6. When Father Cataldo became the Superior of all the Rocky Mountain Missions in 1877, he made the Mission his headquarters.

7. The influence of the church among the Indians prevented them from joining Chief Joseph in his march towards freedom in Canada.

8. In 1877, the United States Government established the boundaries of the Indian Reservation; and the Mission lay outside of this boundary. Since there was not enough land to support farming around the Mission, Father Alexander Diomede, the Superior of the Mission, led the migration of the Indians to DeSmet, Idaho, where another Mission of the Sacred Heart was constructed. Here the Indians settled and here they live today.

9. The old Mission was used little from the time of the departure of the Indians until restoration began in 1928.

10. Early in 1925, Bishop Gorman of Boise appointed a committee to plan the restoration. The Chambers of Commerce of Wallace, Kellogg, Burke, Mullan and Spokane organized a motor pilgrimage to the old Mission in September, 1926. Two thousand people heard Father Cataldo, then 90 years old and revered by the Indians, speak to the Indians in their native tongue. Father Heitman, chairman of the restoration committee, received support from service clubs, Chambers of Commerce of surrounding towns - Coeur d'Alene and Spokane - and the Knights of Columbus organization.

C. References:

1. Cody, Edmund, Reverend, M. A., History of the Coeur d'Alene Mission of the Sacred Heart, Caldwell - Caxton Press, 1930.
2. Schoenberg, Wilfred, S.J., A Chronicle of Catholic History of the Pacific Northwest, Portland - Catholic Sentinel Printery, 1962.
3. Schoenberg, Wilfred, S.J., Jesuits in Montana, 1840-1960, Portland - Oregon Jesuits, 1960.
4. Leeson, M.A., History of Montana, 1739-1885, Chicago - Werner, Burr & Company, 1885.

5. Tuohy, Donald R., "Horseshoes and Handstones: The Meeting of History and Prehistory in the Old Mission of the Sacred Heart", Idaho Yesterday, Vol. II, No. 2, 1958.

6. Robinson, Willard B., "Frontier Architecture: Father Ravalli and the Design of Coeur d'Alene Mission of the Sacred Heart", Idaho Yesterday, Vol. III, No. 4, 1959-60.

7. Hawley, James H., History of Idaho, Chicago - S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1929, Vol. I, pp. 828-9.

8. French, Hiram T., History of Idaho, Chicago & New York - The Lewis Publishing Co., 1914, Vol. I, p. 22.

9. Miller, Joaquin, An Illustrated History of Montana, Chicago & New York - The Lewis Publishing Company, 1894, Vol. II, p. 415.

D. Authority consulted:

Reverend Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., Archivist, Crosby Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The classical design of the structure and its imposing position on a hill was a marvel and a welcome sight to early travelers. The front facade of the Mission is obviously Renaissance in style while the rest of the structure lacks a definite style category. The upper portion above the porch roof or cornice is typical of the false-fronted Western American architecture, but in form is reminiscent of the Baroque style. The sunburst design located in the center of the gable about a circular window (since painted over) is probably an Indian design form. The structure below the cornice is of a Stilted Tuscan design.

2. Condition of Structure: The interior is well maintained. The exterior is in good shape and is usually painted yearly

prior to the annual August 15th celebration held here. The underside of the porch roof is rotted due to early neglect. Structurally the building is sound.

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: In length the Mission is 81'-3" with a 10'-7" porch extending to the north for a total dimension of 91'-10". Its width is 40'-8". The overall height above grade is 51'-2".
2. Foundation: Rock foundation approximately 4' in thickness was originally set in place with mud, but masonry mortar has been added over a period of years to fill cracks and voids.
3. Wall Construction: A system of huge wood uprights supporting the large rafters is made up of timbers about 18" to 22" in size and about 24' in length. Horizontal beams are mortised into the uprights. Holes were drilled in the uprights and willow saplings were interlaced between them. Around the saplings, wild grass was closely woven and mud was spread over the entire surface. Wooden pegs were used exclusively throughout. In one of the rooms off from the altar the original adobe wall construction is visible. In 1865, Father Caruana lined the exterior walls with clapboard.
4. Roof Construction: Rafters from 10" to 12" square resting upon the upright members form the roof structure. The joints that link the rafters to the uprights are all mortised, tenoned, and pinned. It is assumed that the original roof was of hand-split wood shakes.
5. Openings:
 - a. The present square-light windows are not original, but they were constructed to simulate the original windows.
 - b. The two rear doors leading to the outside are not identical. It is not known whether these doors or the front doors are original.
6. Steps: The original steps leading up to the porch were split logs hewn from enormous logs. The present steps are similar in nature.

7. Porch: Six columns, carefully selected for shape, were hand-planed to a smooth surface and rest upon large wood pedestals to support the porch roof.

C. Technical Description of the Interior:

1. A rectangular nave has an altar located at the southern end with two side altars framing the main half-domed covered altar. These side altars have small rooms behind them for use by the priest and for storage of religious artefacts.

2. Flooring: Hand-hewn planks were laid to form a relatively smooth floor. The Indian congregation preferred to sit upon the floor; therefore pews were not built. The present pews are a later addition.

3. Paneling: The walls are paneled up to and above the horizontal tie beam. Paneling believed to have been added in 1865.

4. Ceiling: A large flat ceiling consists of nine large and eight small wood panels, each of a different design. These were hand carved by Brother Huybrechts.

5. Altar: The altar is believed to be the work of Father Ravalli. The hand carved wood, held together without the use of nails, was painted to simulate marble. The walls of the sanctuary are covered with cloth believed to be original fabric. The ceilings of the side altars were of cloth stretched over a decorative wood framework.

6. Statues: The two statues resting on pedestals on either side of the altar were carved by Father Ravalli from solid blocks of wood.

7. Paintings: Some were brought from Europe by the Jesuit Order, while others were executed by Father Ravalli.

D. Site

1. The Mission is located on a hill overlooking the surrounding valley.

2. Outbuildings: A caretaker's residence stands just east of the Mission.

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APPROVED:

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DATE: April 1964

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